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STATUE OF PRESIDENT FRANKLIN PIERCE

UNVEILED AT CONCORD, NEW HAMPSHIRE

NOVEMBER 25, 1914



ADDRESS OF
WILLIAM E. CHANDLER

THE RUMFORD PRESS
CONCORD, N. H.

UNVEILING ON NOVEMBER 25, 1911, OF THE STATUE OF
FRANKLIN PIERCE, ERECTED BY THE STATE
OF NEW HAMPSHIRE.

ORDER OF EXERCISES

Assembling at the Eagle Hotel, the official party and invited guests proceeded to the space reserved in front of the State House yard, where the exercises of unveiling took place.

UNVEILING OF THE STATUE Miss Susan H. Pierce, Hillsborough
COMMENDATION OF THE SCULPTOR Mr. Augustus Lukeman, New York
(Made in his absence by the Presiding Officer)

The company next proceeded to the State House where, in Representatives' Hall, the exercises were continued.

INVOCATION Rev. George H. Reed, D.D., Concord
ADDRESS BY PRESIDENT OF THE DAY Hon. Clarence E. Carr, Andover
DELIVERY OF STATUE Hon. Frank P. Carpenter, Manchester
Chairman of Pierce Statue Commission
ACCEPTANCE OF STATUE His Excellency, Samuel D. Felker
Governor of New Hampshire
ADDRESS Hon. Edgar Aldrich, Littleton
ADDRESS Hon. William E. Chandler, Concord
ORATION Hon. Oliver E. Branch, Manchester
ADDRESS Hon. William F. Whiteher, Haverhill
HYMN "America"

ADDRESS BY WILLIAM E. CHANDLER.

It would be impossible for me on this occasion the dedication of a statue in the State House yard at Concord of President Franklin Pierce to deal critically with his character and career, or to fail to speak of him in words of deep tenderness, for the simple reason that to me as a boy he was kind and helpful and drew me to his heart with irresistible affection. He was a friend of my father and during the presidential campaign of 1852 when I was seventeen years old, he came to my bedside in my home on Centre Street in Concord, where I was sick with fever, and spoke to me cheering words. I was studying law with John H. George and Sidney Webster (George & Webster) and after the canvass opened we moved over to the law office of General Pierce and his partner Josiah Minot where I worked for General Pierce in collecting the fees to which he was entitled alone for cases tried by him outside of Merrimack County where Mr. Minot was an equal partner with him. I took great interest in this collection. His fees were ordinarily from five dollars to ten dollars per day and expenses outside of Concord! Prior to his going to Washington on March 4, 1853, I think I had managed to collect about five hundred dollars, and my expenses for collection were about fifty dollars. There was one charge of five hundred dollars which I became exceedingly desirous of collecting through James Bell (later, in 1855, elected United States senator) who was the senior counsel for the Winnepesaukee Lake Cotton and Woollen Manufacturing Company in a flowage case which had been tried for several weeks. General Pierce gave me a carefully worded letter which I took to Mr. Bell but came home without the money! The claim was, I believe, settled with some deduction before the President went to Washington.

In the spring of 1855 I was in Washington with my friend Isaac Andrew Hill, and Judge Minot took us to the White

House up the back stairs where we saw the President and his Secretary, Mr. Sidney Webster, and were invited to tea, on which occasion there were present only the two Concord boys and an old-fashioned Western gentleman of dignity and politeness. The President goodnaturedly reproached Mr. Hill (whose father, Isaac Hill, had been a Jackson democrat and a United States senator), for leaving the Democratic party and becoming a Know Nothing and a free soiler; but he did not complain of me for being a Whig boy from whom he could expect nothing. The White House had been a lonely home by reason of the sudden death by a railroad accident of the boy son, Benjamin Pierce, on January 6, 1853, after his father's election, but before his inauguration.

With all these kindnesses from the President I could never have failed to love him and it has always remained certain that the boy he loved and helped would

Be to his virtues very kind

Be to his faults a little blind.

So as time passed I came to praise him for his goodness and greatness.

To the Grafton and Coös Bar Association, at Plymouth on January 6, 1888, I said of him from personal knowledge:

All my own observation of this brilliant advocate was while I was a law student under seventeen years of age; but I could even then appreciate the fact and am able now confidently to say, that very few American lawyers have equalled him in ingenuity, tact, grace, eloquence and power before a jury; nor should his ability and success as a jury lawyer obscure the further truth, that, while not a learned lawyer, he had one of the clearest of legal minds, and an unsurpassed faculty of stating and arguing legal principles. I think a stronger impression was made upon my youthful mind by the arguments which I heard him make on legal questions, than by his conduct of jury cases. As a many-sided lawyer, capable of conducting trials of all kinds, it seems to me that he stood facile princeps at the New Hampshire bar, not even yielding the palm to the massive and erudite, but eccentric, Ira Perley.

Further I said on that occasion:

The fact that Franklin Pierce became President of the United States should lead the people of his native state, without forgetting his mistakes, and without distinction of party, to do him, in some appropriate method, signal honor. On the first Wednesday in June, 1845, Franklin Pierce and John P. Hale held that memorable debate in the North Church in Concord, which was the actual initiative in New Hampshire of the great political anti-slavery contest, the basis of which made the political issues of the state and the country for the forty years which followed, which had such a controlling influence upon the personal fortunes of both these distinguished and eloquent men, and which, as to some of its incidents and outgrowths, has not yet come to an end.

The heroic statue of Daniel Webster, whom New Hampshire proudly gave to be the great forensic defender of the Union and the Constitution and who, in spite of his political and personal shortcomings, was the greatest intellect that America has yet produced, fitly stands, the gift of a liberal private citizen, in front of the capitol at Concord. To the right and to the left of this massive memorial I hope to live to see erected similar statues of Franklin Pierce, given by New Hampshire to be president of our republic, and John P. Hale, the first distinctive anti-slavery United States senator and New Hampshire's noblest champion in the cause of human freedom.

At an Old Home Day Celebration in Concord on August 24, 1904, I also publicly recorded my opinion of President Pierce and my belief that the people of his native state, without forgetting his mistakes and without distinction of party, should do him signal honor by erecting his statue in the State House yard.

The statue of John P. Hale having been placed in the State House yard on August 13, 1892, once more I ventured to speak in favor of the erection of a statue of President Pierce, at a Republican State Convention of September 17, 1908. I introduced and urged this resolution:

Resolved, That the Republican State Convention desires that the next legislature provide for the erection in the State House yard at Concord of a statue of Franklin Pierce.

a native and distinguished citizen of New Hampshire, an able lawyer, an eloquent orator, a general in the national army, a representative in congress, a United States senator and a President of the United States; and the convention expresses the hope that this movement for the erection of such a memorial statue will receive the approval and support of all our citizens without regard to party distinctions.

Unwise opposition arose and the report says:

Mr. Chandler obtained the floor and stated that he would be unwilling to have the resolution passed by the convention unless by substantially a unanimous vote and therefore that he withdrew the same.

On March 4, 1913—Woodrow Wilson's day—I made my last appeal for the statue, this time to the Democratic legislature of 1913, saying:

If the Democrats will all advocate it, enough Republicans will vote for it to make its erection sure.

All opposition from Republicans should cease. As people grow old they need not change their opinions, but they ought to moderate their animosities and recognize the good that is in all men.

General Pierce in his relations with those he loved and those who loved him was one of the gentlest and most joyous of men; and of the twelve Presidents whom I have known and talked pleasantly with in the White House he came very near to being the most gracious.

Equally with Lewis Cass and Daniel Webster, Franklin Pierce is entitled to have the harsh judgments of anti-slavery men moderated, as time passes, through a recognition of the sincerity of their fears of a dissolution of the Union in connection with controversies concerning slavery.

The strength of this plea in their behalf has been felicitously shown by Mr. Blaine and distinctly by me as appears in a memorandum published by me in 1908. I earnestly hope that every citizen of New Hampshire will in the era of the present day give his voice in favor of a statue, erected by the state of New Hampshire and not by any individual, of President Franklin Pierce.

It was most gratifying to me and creditable to the people of New Hampshire that without any further mani-

festation of party animosity the legislature on May 13, 1913, passed a law directing the Governor and Council to erect the statue and making an appropriation therefor; and the result of this commendable action stands before us in the graceful statue of Franklin Pierce today unveiled. We are now here, citizens of both politics, to give to the President's memory the praise and honor which is implied in the existence of the memorial.

On four official occasions it has been my duty to deal with the questions of the judgments which should be dealt out to what were called the pro-slavery statesmen of the ante-war period.

The first was on the reception by the Congress of a statue of Lewis Cass from the State of Michigan on February 18 and 21, 1889; the second on the reception by Congress of a statue of Daniel Webster (with one of John Stark) from the State of New Hampshire, on December 20, 1894; the third on the unveiling of a statue of Mr. Webster in Washington presented to the United States by Stilson Hutchins on January 18, 1900; and the fourth on the celebration of the restoration of the Birthplace House of Mr. Webster at Franklin, New Hampshire, on August 28, 1913.

It will be an honor to me whenever a citizen of my native state, which has so much honored me, will read the words of praise which I am able to give to these distinguished men who gave renown to the state of their nativity down to and including the last, whose statue we now unveil too long delayed in its erection.

In considering the question there is no wisdom in ignoring the reasons for the delay which has taken place. They are President Pierce's relations to the subject of slavery. He was a pro-slavery president and therefore must have no statue it is said. At the end of fifty years after slavery has been blotted out of existence this reason should be disregarded.

The same objection could be made to statues of two other sons of New Hampshire - Lewis Cass and Daniel Webster;

yet the statue of Cass, given by the Republican state of Michigan to the national gallery, was received by Congress with eulogies participated in by the New Hampshire delegation, and the statue of Webster was given by New Hampshire to that gallery with appropriate ceremonies, and a like statue of Webster was given to the state by a private citizen, was received by the commonwealth and placed conspicuously in the State House yard and now stands there in company with the statues of John Stark and John P. Hale. On none of these occasions was there any attempt to avoid consideration of the hostility which had existed against both Cass and Webster; both had been denounced with extreme bitterness, the one as always a pro-slavery man, the other as having wholly forsaken the anti-slavery cause. You all know the animosities aroused in those days. But they did not continue to prevail against Cass and Webster. They ought not longer to prevail against Pierce. The real reason why we should not at this late day longer refrain from erecting statues to such men is that their hesitancy to make efforts for the abolition of slavery, their willingness to make compromises in behalf of slavery, arose from their deep devotion to the union of these states which it was believed would be endangered if controversy over slavery continued. Bear in mind that these men were nearer to the days of the formation of the constitution than we now are after more than one hundred years of national life have passed, and the Union has been cemented and strengthened as the result of bloody war. They felt during the first half of the nineteenth century that the Union, although a very sacred bond, might easily be broken into numerous discordant single states if the love of the Union was not cherished in the hearts of all men and sacrifices made for its preservation. Upon this point Mr. Blaine shows the reasons why the utmost allowance should be made for these great men of New Hampshire who were in favor of yielding much to slavery in order to save the Union and who, although they were mistaken in their conclusions, are

still entitled to be remembered and honored as honest and sincere in their public opinions and patriotic in their national conduct.

MR. BLAINE'S EXPLANATION OF MR. WEBSTER'S ACTION.

Mr. Blaine in his "Twenty Years of Congress" (Vol. 1, page 93) attributes Mr. Webster's pro-slavery action to sincere sentiments of patriotism. He says:

He belonged with those who could remember the first president, who personally knew much of the hardships and sorrows of the Revolutionary period, who were born to poverty and reared to privation. To these the formation of the federal government had come as a gift from Heaven and they had heard from the lips of the living Washington his farewell words that "the Union is the edifice of our real independence, the support of our tranquillity at home, our peace abroad, our prosperity, our safety and of the very liberty which we so highly prize; that for this Union we should cherish a cordial, habitual, immovable attachment, and should discountenance whatever may suggest even a suspicion that it can in any event be abandoned."

Mr. Webster had in his own lifetime seen the thirteen colonies grow to thirty powerful states. He had seen three millions of people, enfeebled and impoverished by a long struggle, increased eightfold in number, surrounded by all the comforts, charms and securities of life. All this spoke to him of the Union and of its priceless blessings. He now heard its advantages discussed, its perpetuity doubted, its existence threatened.

A convention of slaveholding states had been called to meet at Nashville for the purpose of considering the possible separation of the sections. Mr. Webster felt that a generation had been born who were undervaluing their inheritance and who might by temerity destroy it. Under motives imposed by these surroundings, he spoke for the preservation of the Union. He believed it to be seriously endangered. His apprehensions were ridiculed by many who ten years after Mr. Webster was in his grave saw for the first time how real and how terrible were the perils upon which those apprehensions were founded. . . . The thoughtful reconsideration of his severest critics must allow that Mr. Webster saw before him a divided duty, and that he chose

the part which in his patriotic judgment was demanded by the supreme danger of the hour.

But while accepting as just, and reiterating as I have on the occasions referred to, this vindication by Mr. Blaine of the "Union savers" who were unkindly reproached in their day of debate, it is necessary for me to avow that it is easier for me to do this in behalf of the advocates of the compromise measures of 1850 than in behalf of the statesmen who four years later devised and carried to a passage through Congress the repeal of the Missouri Compromise.

This repeal was utterly indefensible, even although sustained by the unjust and unfortunate Dred Scott decision, and remains a wrongful act of the American Congress, which was fraught with distressing consequences. Yet, even here, because their public action was, as much as Mr. Webster's, based upon an "honest motive" Stephen A. Douglas and Franklin Pierce are to be acquitted of unforgivable public acts and are to be praised and honored for their careers as a whole of statesmanship and patriotism.

Therefore, now so it is, that in my declining years, I find myself unable to harshly criticize and condemn any of the leaders of the first ninety years of American Independence, or to withhold from any of them, by reason of such faults and mistakes as may be developed in any career of prominence, the praises that are due to them for any wise and noble and patriotic deeds.

Those of President Pierce were narrated down to 1852 by his Bowdoin College associate and constant friend, Nathaniel Hawthorne, in a most attractive and felicitous campaign biography in that year, and were fully recorded in 1888 in Appleton's Cyclopaedia of American Biography by one who had been a United States senator from New Hampshire—Bainbridge Wadleigh, a Republican, in a fair and accurate recital.

Franklin Pierce was a scholar of superior knowledge, an orator of captivating eloquence, a lawyer of acute learning, a trial advocate of unsurpassed skill and force, a brave

soldier on the battlefield of his country, a public official of ability and fidelity, and a President of conscientiousness and patriotism, whose statue in this State House yard is fittingly the companion of that of the soldier John Stark and of those of the statesmen Daniel Webster and John P. Hale. Before future generations there will continue to stand here this testimonial to President Pierce from all the people of his state asserting his high character, his splendid achievements and the noble traits which made him admired and beloved by his countrymen.

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